

The gift of the Spirit

Today we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. At our morning services we heard the account from the Acts of the Apostles of that first Pentecost when the twelve were inspired by the gift of the Spirit to preach the love of God to all nations. From this event we can follow the spread of the Christian faith to all corners of the known world – a powerful influence on the whole world of that time and that place.

The Spirit continues to enliven the Church as we seek to witness to God's love in our own lives – in this time and this place. We do this in many ways – joined together by our common fellowship and the faith that we share. We gather to worship God, we pray for each other and for the communities in which we live and work, we seek to serve those we know to be in need and we seek to build each other up in love that God's love might be known through us.

One way that we share our faith here in this place is by the witness that this building has to those who worship in it and those who visit it. Each day people come in to this building and are touched by the sense of God's presence that it has – a presence that is the fruit of constant prayer through the centuries; of people seeking to open their hearts and minds to God in their time and their place. Some of the people who come here come as part of the gathered community of faith – be it as members of the Sunday congregation, members of the choir who maintain a rhythm of worship on Sundays through most of the year, or those who gather day by day to pray for the church as it serves God in so many ways. But others come to this place and are touched by God's presence.

Our reading from Exodus ended by saying that we cannot see God and live – an acknowledgement that our capacity as humans to understand God is limited (even with the example of Christ and the gift of the Spirit). And so it is that we each seek God in our own way – through scripture, through learning, through music or through art. Art has a capacity, through symbol and ambiguity to lead us to explore God in ways that words fail – by speaking to heart rather than mind we can find ways of at least glimpsing God that take us beyond the words of doctrine or dogma.

And so this evening we celebrate the work of those who have created a work of art for this building that symbolises the gift of the Spirit to those first apostles and reminds us of the continued presence of the Spirit in our lives. In a moment's time we will dedicate this altar frontal to the glory of God and in the hope that it will inspire those who see it to see God not only in the lives of those first apostles who it represents but in our own time and our own place. Amen.